

San Jacinto River Waste Pits, Texas

Site Update - August 2009

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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BACKGROUND:

The San Jacinto River Waste Pits (SJRWP) site is located on the western bank of the San Jacinto River near Houston, immediately north of the Interstate Highway 10 bridge. The site occupies a 20.6 acre tract of land currently owned by Virgil C. McGinnis Trustee and is bounded on the south by Interstate Highway 10, on the east by the San Jacinto River main channel, and on the north and west by shallow water off the River's main channel.

The primary hazardous substances documented at the SJRWP site are dioxins (polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans). Samples collected in the disposal pits and in the San Jacinto River have dioxin concentrations as high as 41,300 parts per trillion dioxin-Toxic Equivalents.

A fish consumption advisory based on dioxin is in place on this segment of the watershed. The SJRWP site was listed on the EPA National Priorities List on March 19, 2008.

STATUS OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES:

I. Remedial Investigation (RI)

Currently, RI implementation is being negotiated with the potentially responsible parties (PRPs). The purpose of the RI is to define the nature and extent of the contamination from the SJRWP site. Federal trustees (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife) and State of Texas trustees (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Texas General Land Office) are assisting EPA with the RI implementation.

On August 28, 2009, a meeting between EPA, TCEQ, and trustees will be held to review the technical aspects of a soil stabilization action proposal by the PRPs. In addition, conditions for USACE permits will be finalized and transmitted to USACE as part of the overall watershed management strategy.

II. Water Quality Management

EPA has concerns that dredging operations in the area around the SJRWP site could impact water quality. EPA is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which has authority to issue dredging permits, to resolve these concerns. EPA has proposed a conference call with representatives from the Galveston Corps and the TCEQ for August 31 to review the progress of workgroups established to address the issue.

III. Enforcement

EPA met with the PRP Group, IPC and MIMC, to discuss a proposal the two parties have regarding stabilization of the SJRWP site. The PRP Group has until September 20, 2009, to submit a good faith offer to negotiate the SJRWP RI and feasibility study with EPA.